Honey Badger TES Wildlife Analysis

Project File W-039

Prepared by: Susan Stanley, Wildlife Biologist
For: Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Date: October 6, 2021

Introduction

The Honey Badger project wildlife analysis tiers to the analysis in the Forest Plan final environmental impact statement (FEIS) (USDA 2013) Terrestrial Wildlife discussion (pages 210-411). The Forest Plan FEIS analysis of potential effects discusses habitat needs and effects of key stressors, including timber harvest, road construction and motorized access, prescribed burning, and the potential influence of various strategies and approaches to management of the Idaho Panhandle National Forest. The Honey Badger project analysis tiers to the Forest Plan, which provides direction for management of threatened, endangered, candidate and regional sensitive species.

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires Federal agencies to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure that any action authorized, funded, or carried out by the agency is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of listed species or destroy or adversely modify their critical habitat. A list of threatened, endangered and proposed species and designated critical habitat that may be present in the Honey Badger project area was obtained from the Fish and Wildlife Service website on April 23, 2021 (Consultation code 01EIFW00-2021-SLI-1147).

Sensitive species are administratively designated by the Regional Forester (FSM 2670.5) and managed under the authority of the National Forest Management Act (Forest Plan FEIS, page 294).

Activities proposed in the Honey Badger project area and considered in this analysis are described in the environmental assessment, with maps and supporting information in the project files.

Table 1 displays federally-listed species and Table 2 displays species identified as sensitive by the Regional Forester that are known to (or may) occur on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests, presence of species or habitat, determination of effects, and other relevant information. The information provided in this document, with supporting documentation in the project record, is sufficient to serve as the Biological Assessment and Evaluation for wildlife.

Forest Plan Compliance

Compliance with Forest Plan elements relevant to wildlife is documented on the Forest Plan worksheet for the Honey Badger project. Activities would result in a trend toward the desired conditions for forest vegetation, thereby providing habitat for native fauna adapted to open forests and early seral habitats (or whose life/natural history and ecology are partially provided by those habitats).

Table 1. Status of federally-listed species in the Honey Badger project area.

Species and Status	Species or habitat present?	Species or habitat potentially affected?	Determination of effect	Comments
Canada lynx *(Lynx canadensis)* Threatened	No	No	No effect	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed lynx (pages 220-243). Habitat analysis for lynx is based on the Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction (NRLMD), which was incorporated into the 2015 IPNF Land Management Plan (USDA 2007, USDA 2015). Most of the objectives, standards and guidelines listed in the NRLMD for the maintenance of lynx habitat and populations apply only to lynx habitat within lynx analysis units (LAU). There are no designated LAUs or lynx habitat identified on the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District. The Linkage Areas (LINK) objective, standards and guidelines are the only NRLMD that apply to the HB project. The LINK standards and guidelines apply to habitat and land areas between lynx habitat patches and between LAUs. The project is in compliance with the All the LINK Objectives, standards and guidelines and All 01 direction in the NRLMD. There is no lynx habitat and the species is not known or suspected in the project area.
Grizzly bear *(Ursus arctos)* Threatened	Yes	No	No effect	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed grizzlies (pages 243-267). Grizzly bears are identified as threatened in the two populations that reside (in part) on the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. Two recovery zones overlap the Forests, neither of which overlap the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District. In December 2020, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service updated where grizzly bears may be present outside recovery zones, including parts of the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District and a small part of the project area. However, 'may be present' is not the same as occupancy or occurrence. The map is based off of grizzly bear occurrences within the different hydrological units. The project area is located mainly within the wildland-urban interface, is outside any grizzly bear recovery zone and contains a low amount of secure grizzly bear habitat due to the presence of motorized routes throughout the area and proximity to developed or non-Forest Service lands. There is a minimal probability of occurrence of grizzly bears on the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District and no records of their presence were found in the project area. Based on the low amount of secure habitat, lack of occurrence and high amounts of motorized routes and human activity in the area, there would be no effect on grizzly habitat or the species. For further analysis and discussion please see the detailed Biological Assessment W-029.

Table 2. Status of sensitive species in the Honey Badger project area.

Sensitive Species	Species or habitat present?	Species or habitat potentially affected?	Determination of effect	Comments
Flammulated owl (*Otus flammeolus*) Fringed Myotis *(Myotis thysandodes)* and Pygmy nuthatch *(Sitta pygmaea)*	Yes	Yes	May Impact Individuals or Habitat	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed Flammulated owl (pages 327-336), pygmy nuthatch (pages 350-357) and fringed myotis (pages 300-308) and all three are considered together here as they are species that are closely tied to dry-site habitat, typically consisting of large, mature, very dry ponderosa pine and/or Douglas fir forest. Approximately one fifth of the Honey Badger Project area is dry-site forest, or capable habitat for these species, which is scattered throughout the project area. One flammulated owl was heard in the project area during surveys, however it was outside any area proposed for work. No pygmy nuthatch surveys were conducted or are known from the project area. Fringed myotis are not known to occur on the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, although potential habitat exists at three adits in dry-site habitat that are open, or possibly-open, with only one of these occurring in a work unit. Harvesting and fuels reduction, when done to trend towards the desired conditions for forest vegetation, will improve or maintain flammulated owl, fringed myotis and pygmy nuthatch habitat, move habitat conditions towards historic conditions, make stands more resilient to disturbance and maintain or improve snag habitat. Project activities could result in temporary disturbance to individuals of this habitat group. Disturbance would include the potential removal of some cavities/trees available for nesting or roosting and possible displacement associated with harvesting and prescribed fire. These disturbances are of minor consequence given the mobility of these species, the silvicultural prescription to retain large trees and snags (particularly ponderosa pine and Douglas fir) and the post-treatment benefit of maintaining dry-site forest conditions beneficial to this group. Based on the analysis, the proposed action may impact individual flammulated owls, pygmy nuthatches and fringed myotis or their habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. For further analysis and discussion please refer to the Dry Site Species Analysis W-005 and other project files including W-006, W-007, W-008 and W-009.
Black-backed woodpecker (*Picoides arcticus*)	Yes	Yes	May Impact Individuals or Habitat	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed black-backed woodpeckers (pages 308-316). Black-backed woodpeckers are primary cavity nesters that excavate their own cavities, usually in dead or dying trees, and specialize in forests with insect outbreaks from either wildfire, disease or other reasons. Within the project area there is currently no high-quality habitat for this species, which is defined as timbered stands with greater than 40% canopy cover (pre-fire) that have burned with moderate to high severities in large (approximately 200 acres) patch sizes. There have been no recent large wildfires and only two seasons of prescribed burns in the past 6 years in the project area. All of the prescribed burns were low-intensity fires below 200 acres. However, root diseases and the bark-inhabiting insects that can be associated with unhealthy trees are widespread in the project area. According to the project's Forest

Sensitive Species	Species or habitat present?	Species or habitat potentially affected?	Determination of effect	Comments
				Health Evaluation, over 80% of the Honey Badger project area (over 40,200 acres) were designated as moderate root disease hazard. Given the presence of these diseased and insect-infested trees and snags throughout the project area, it is expected that black-backed woodpeckers occur at low levels in the Honey Badger area. Proposed prescribed burns for wildlife habitat improvement and fuels reduction could create over 5,000 acres of habitat for black-backed woodpeckers. The amount created will vary based on the severity of the burns and the acreage that actually burns. Up to 11 potential high-quality patches of approximately 200-500 acres would be created with the proposed action. The proposed action would increase the amount of suitable and potentially high-quality habitat for this woodpecker and improve existing conditions. Most large snags in treatment units would be retained, and post-harvest slash treatment is expected to result in some incidental snag creation. Effects are expected to be relatively small, but positive and measurable. Consequently, the proposed action may impact black-backed woodpeckers or their habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. For further analysis and discussion please refer to the Black-backed woodpecker analysis W-010 and associated project file W-011.
Fisher (*Martes pennanti*)	Yes	Yes	May Impact Individuals or Habitat	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed fisher (pages 322-327). Fishers are forest carnivores that are present at low population densities, occurring most commonly in landscapes associated with mature forests, especially in riparian areas. They avoid openings and select areas with a dense canopy cover of large trees. Over half the Honey Badger project area contains a somewhat fragmented pattern of mature habitat that is capable of supporting fisher, although no evidence of their presence has been found there. The proposed action will employ several harvest methods to remove diseased/unhealthy trees to improve forest resiliency and diversity, which will benefit fisher habitat in the long-term. Other beneficial project activities include preservation of old-growth stands, allowance of natural vegetation progression in riparian areas (potentially suitable habitat and important travel corridors) and preservation and recruitment of large woody debris (potential denning sites). In the short-term, there will be a decrease in the amount of capable habitat that may impact fisher habitat at a localized scale, but is not expected to significantly impact fisher populations due to the large home-range of this species, their mobility and the considerable amount of capable habitat in and near the project area. Instead, wildfire, insects/disease and the change in density and type of dominant species will largely determine the amount and pattern of fisher habitat on the Forest in the future. Therefore, the proposed action may impact fisher or their habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the

Sensitive Species	Species or habitat present?	Species or habitat potentially affected?	Determination of effect	Comments
				population or species. For further analysis and discussion please refer to the Fisher analysis W-012 and associate project files W-013, W-014, W-015 and W-016.
Townsend's big-eared bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii*)	Yes	Yes	May Impact Individuals or Habitat	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed Townsend's big-eared bats (pages 300-308). Townsend's big-eared bats are primarily a cave-dwelling species and although they occur in a wide variety of habitats, distribution tends to be correlated with the availability of caves, especially old mine workings. This species has not been documented in the Honey Badger project area, although it is possible they might use the area for foraging. Two adits with bat gates are present in a proposed harvest unit and three adits with unknown bat gate status occur in proposed burn units. The shape of the harvest unit is long and narrow, which will leave much of the potential foraging area around these adits intact. If bats are present in the proposed harvest or burn units, they would be able to shift to alternate, nearby foraging areas as they would in the case of a natural fire or other forest disturbance. Although this species is not known or suspected in the project's activity area, nor are there any known maternity or hibernation roosts for bats on the district, it is possible that Townsends big-eared bats may utilize the project area for foraging. Therefore the proposed action may affect individual bats; however it is not expected to have a measurable difference at the population level of this species. Consequently, the Honey Badger proposed action may impact Townsends big-eared bats or their habitat, but would not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. For further analysis and discussion please refer to Townsend's big-eared bat analysis W-017.
North American Wolverine	Yes	Yes	May Impact Individuals or Habitat	Wolverines are a low density, wide-ranging species occurring over a variety of alpine, boreal and arctic habitats. The southern portion of the species' range extends into high-elevation portions of Washington, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, California, and Colorado. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service determined that wolverine appear to be little affected by habitat modifications and changes to the vegetative characteristics derived from land management activities such as timber harvest and prescribed fire. Both male and female dispersal habitat are present in the project area, which is characterized by open roads and past timber harvest. While these areas could provide foraging opportunities for wolverine, they do not represent the secure habitat that wolverine seem to prefer. There are no confirmed observations of wolverines in the project area. Given their wide-ranging nature, it is not unreasonable to assume wolverines may be present, although their presence is likely to be transitory. However, any disturbance to wolverine as a result of project activities would be temporary, and ample displacement habitat is available in adjacent areas. The habitat changes as a result of the Honey Badger Project would have minor effects on this species. The effects to habitat would be minimal relative to the scale of a

Sensitive Species	Species or habitat present?	Species or habitat potentially affected?	Determination of effect	Comments
				wolverine home range. As a result, potential impacts to wolverine or their habitat would be discountable and would not be considered to be a threat to the persistence of the species. Consequently, the proposed action, in conjunction with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions, may impact individuals or their habitat, but would not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. For further analysis and discussion please refer to the Wolverine analysis W-019 and associate project file W-020.
Gray wolf *(Canis lupus)*	Yes	Yes	May Impact Individuals or Habitat	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed gray wolf (pages 336-342). Wolves are highly social animals requiring large areas to roam and feed. They exhibit no particular habitat preference relative to vegetative structure and composition. The gray wolf is a habitat generalist that requires an abundant prey base for survival. An inadequate prey density and a high level of human disturbance are the main factors that appear to limit wolf population and distribution. Wolf packs appear to be sensitive to human disturbance near active den sites and depending on the disturbance may abandon the site. They are also sensitive to human disturbance at rendezvous sites and are most sensitive around the early summer sites. Wolves are known to occur across the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District and the proposed harvest units are in a known wolf pack territory. Due to their dependence on elk as a preferred prey species, the elk management unit (EMU) 3-2 encompassing the proposed project area is used as the cumulative effects area for wolves. At 227 square miles this area is large enough to evaluate effects on a wide-ranging species such as the gray wolf. Habitat quality in terms of cover and forage for elk is considered low due to the low levels of foraging habitat within security blocks. Under the proposed action the creation of openings through the harvest and prescribed burning of timber would affect elk habitat by increasing available forage. The quality and quantity of forage habitat in the area is expected to increase as both the logged and burned stands progress through early seral stages, i.e. grass, forbs, shrubs. Habitat conditions for the wolf prey base are expected to improve with the increase in forage and maintenance of security habitat in the project area. The construction, reconstruction and use of roads for this project could disturb wolves and cause displacement; however these roads would be closed post-activities and there would be essentially no change to the open motorized road system. The proposed action would not affect any known denning or rendezvous site or interrupt any known linkages or connections between habitats. There would be no consequential change in the open motorized road system after project completion. The analysis of potential impacts on elk has determined that there would be a potential increase in prey availability. The proposed action would have no adverse impact on gray wolf habitat nor affect their occurrence at a landscape level. Based on

Sensitive Species	Species or habitat present?	Species or habitat potentially affected?	Determination of effect	Comments
				the nature of wolf occurrence and their distribution across the district, their ability to readily disperse long distances, the type of habitat affected, the scope of this action and the implementation of design features; this project may impact individuals or habitat, but will not likely contribute to a trend towards federal listing or loss of viability to the population or species.
Western Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*)	Yes	Yes	May Impact Individuals or Habitat	Western or boreal toad breeding habitat includes shallow, quiet water in lakes, marshes, bogs, ponds, wet meadows, slow-moving streams, backwater channels of rivers and other persistent water sources. Young toads are restricted in distribution and movement by available moist habitat, while adults can move several miles and reside in marshes, wet meadows or forested areas. Due to the mesic nature of much of the forests of the IPNF, toads have opportunities to find persistent small water sources for breeding and could successfully disperse through moist forest to breeding and overwintering habitat. There are several areas of riparian complexes, including freshwater forested/shrub and emergent wetlands, in the project area that could provide potential breeding habitat for toads. It is possible western toads are present, although there are no known observations within the project area. The proposed action may impact individual toads during project implementation. However, this risk is considerably reduced by project design including timing restrictions (if needed), Inland Native Fish Strategy (INFS) buffers and Best Management Practices (BMPs). As a result, the potential for disturbance to potential breeding habitat (areas with still water) and reproduction is discountable. Post project, the open road system in the area would be restored to its pre-project level; so there would be no change to the risk of potential direct mortality from vehicles. As western toads may disperse to and travel through upland areas, the proposed activity has the potential to disturb individuals. While the action alternative may affect individual toads, based on the design features and no consequential change in public motorized access, it is not expected to have a measurable difference at the population level. Consequently, the Honey Badger proposed action in conjunction with past, present and reasonably foreseeable actions may impact western toads or their habitat, but would not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species. For further analysis and discussion please refer to the Western toad analysis W-021.
Coeur d'Alene Salamander (*Plethodon idahoensis*)	Yes	No	No Impact	Coeur d'Alene salamanders are restricted to cool, damp habitats that have relatively stable temperatures and moisture levels and have been found in three major types of habitats in northern Idaho: springs, seeps, waterfall spray zones and along stream edges between 1,800 to 3,500 feet elevation. Known populations occur in association with fractured rock formations in conjunction with both persistent and intermittent surface water, usually in coniferous forests. One record of the Coeur d'Alene

Sensitive Species	Species or habitat present?	Species or habitat potentially affected?	Determination of effect	Comments
				salamander was found at Fernan Creek in the Honey Badger project area from 2006 (W-022). This area would not be treated with this project. There is no known suitable habitat (fractured rock seeps, waterfall spray zones, and stream edges) in units proposed for harvest. Due to the geology of the area, the fractured rock seepage habitat favored by Coeur d'Alene salamanders on the IPNF is very rare within the Honey Badger project area; and no potential high or moderate quality areas of this habitat were located during field reviews. Additionally, the application of riparian habitat conservation area buffer zones means that any potentially suitable habitat associated with stream edges and waterfall spray zones would not be affected by project activities. These unharvested riparian buffers would also protect any fractured rock seep habitat (if present), along the lengths of roads adjacent to the creeks; as well as mitigate any potential changes in runoff or streamflow. This project does not have any activity that would directly or indirectly affect Coeur d'Alene salamander habitat. Based on the above reasons as well as the lack of suitable habitat, the proposed action would have no impact on Coeur d'Alene salamanders, and no further analysis or discussion is warranted.
Bald eagle *(Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)	Yes	No	No Impact	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed bald eagles (pages 297-300). Bald eagles occupy riparian or lakeshore habitat almost exclusively during the breeding season and select isolated shoreline areas with larger trees to pursue such nesting, feeding and roosting. Potential nesting and roosting habitat may be present along Hayden Lake and nearby streams, although the lakeshore and surrounding environment is being increasingly developed for residential and recreational use. Mid-winter eagle surveys have recorded small numbers of bald eagles in the Hayden Lake area since the early 2000s with none recorded in 2021 (see project files W-023, W-024)). Although nesting has occurred in this area in the past, there are no known recent bald eagle nests or winter roosts in the Hayden Lake area or the Honey Badger project area. Bald eagles are infrequently observed in the Hayden Lake area, possibly due to increasing human disturbance and development in and around the lake. Bald eagles are unlikely to make more than incidental use of any creeks in the project area. Furthermore, Forest Plan guideline FW-GDL-WL-05 protecting bald eagle nests applies to all management activities; which would avoid adverse impacts if any eagles happen to nest in the area during sale activities. Therefore this project would have no impact on bald eagles or potential habitat and no further analysis or discussion is warranted.
American peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus anatum)*	No	No	No Impact	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed peregrine falcon (pages 294-297). Peregrine falcons are seasonal migrants to northern Idaho, nesting in the northern temperate regions while wintering in the U.S. and southward. They nest on cliffs that are typically higher than 100 feet, with overhanging ledges or potholes and a vertical surface that provide protection from predation. There are no known current or historic

Sensitive Species	Species or habitat present?	Species or habitat potentially affected?	Determination of effect	Comments
				eyries in the project's action area or the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District. There is no cliff or cliff-like habitat present in the project area. The species is not known or suspected to occur in the area. Given the lack of nesting habitat in the Honey Badger project area, project activities would have no impact on peregrine falcons or potential habitat and no further analysis or discussion is warranted.
Harlequin duck (*Histrionicus histrionicus*)	No	No	No Impact	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed harlequin duck (pages 342-345). Harlequin ducks are small sea ducks that are seasonal residents of whitewater streams in the northern Rockies. The streams in the project area are considered too small and with limited in-stream structure to provide suitable habitat. These streams do not have the riparian habitat and stream characteristics along with low disturbance known to be used by harlequins on the IPNF. The species is not known or suspected in the activity area. In addition, all streams in the project are protected from harvest by riparian habitat conservation area buffers. Based on the lack of suitable habitat and occurrence there would be no impact on habitat or the species and no further analysis or discussion is warranted.
Black swift (*Cypseloides niger)*	No	No	No Impact	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed black swifts (pages 316-318). In the western U.S. black swifts nest on small ledges of cliffs, caves, or other vertical surfaces near or behind dripping water sources, waterfalls, or turbulent spray zones. There are no steep, shaded waterfalls near proposed activities that may serve as suitable habitat. The species is not known or suspected in the action area. The Honey Badger project area is in a different drainage from the two known nesting locations in the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger District, and project effects pertinent to this species such as streamflow effects, would be limited to the project area. Therefore project activities would have no impact on black swifts or potential nesting and no further analysis or discussion is warranted.
Common loon (*Gavia immer*)	No	No	No Impact	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed common loon (pages 318-322). Common loons generally nest in clear, fish-bearing lakes surrounded by forest, with rocky shorelines, bays, islands and floating bogs that have emergent shoreline vegetation and secluded areas for nesting and brood rearing. The project takes place on the east side of the 3,800-acre Hayden Lake with a shoreline developed for residential and recreational use, including a marina. The species is not known from the project area, nor expected to be present due to a lack of suitable habitat and a high level of human disturbance. Based on this lack of suitable habitat and occurrence there would be no impact on habitat or the species and no further analysis or discussion is warranted.
Northern Bog Lemming (*Synaptomys borealis*)	No	No	No Impact	The Forest Plan FEIS addressed northern bog lemming (pages 346-350). The bog lemming has a widespread northern distribution reaching the southern extension of its range in northern Washington and Idaho and are apparently relatively uncommon in this portion of their range. On the IPNF, they are only known to occur in the far northern ("Kaniksu" Zone) districts. There is no alpine wet meadow or fen/bog habitat

Sensitive Species	Species or habitat present?	Species or habitat potentially affected?	Determination of effect	Comments
				in the action area or documented bog lemming observations on the Coeur d'Alene River Ranger district. Therefore, the Honey Badger Project would have no impact on the northern bog lemming and no further analysis or discussion is warranted.

REFERENCES :

USFS. 2007. Northern Rockies Lynx Management Direction Record of Decision and Attachment. Northern, Intermountain and Rocky Mountain Regions. 67 p.

USDA Forest Service. 2011. Region One Sensitive Species List – Wildlife (Final). 5 p.

USFS. 2013. Idaho Panhandle National Forests Land Management Plan 2015 Revision; Terrestrial Biological Assessment. Forest Service. Northern Region.

USFS. 2015. Idaho Panhandle National Forests Land Management Plan: 2015 Revision. Forest Service. Northern Region. 187 pp.

USFS. 2015. Idaho Panhandle National Forests Land Management 2015 Revision; FEIS. Forest Service. Northern Region.